

T.P. On AB...

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ask." Boy, how many digs can I stand?

Speaking of Bernard Thomas, he said he'd be making the jaunt to Germany with us if he and his wife, Marvis, weren't celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in Austin, Texas, this Sunday.

"I married her for her money," said Thomas, recalling that Marvis had \$8 and he none when the two farm kids from South Dakota wed in Louisville, Ky., while he was a soldier, in 1944.

"I had known Marvis since we were 12. I was 20, waiting to ship overseas, and she was 19," he recalled, adding, "she ought to get a medal for staying with me that long, but it's been real good. I wouldn't trade it for anything." Not even a pair of Super Bowl ducats, Bernie?

Their three children, Deanna Payne, Margaret Atkins and Carolyn Hanschen, have planned a party, with about 100 people expected to attend. I wish I could be there to share their happiness.

■■■

RICHARD MORGAN, MY old pal from Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati, just phoned to invite me to the debut performance of the Alvin & The Chipmunks and The Magic Camera Show at his building this Thursday night. The new arena attraction is being produced by Steve Goldberg of Golden Images, Los Angeles.

Our West Coast Editor, Linda Deckard, is on top of this story, and she said they'll play eight shows at Riverfront, Jan. 12-16, followed by seven shows at the Rosemont Horizon, Chicago, Jan. 19-22. Unfortunately, I had to beg off because of the trip to Germany.

I'm almost afraid to answer the phone, but at least Morgan didn't ask for Super Bowl tickets.

■■■

SANDEFUR REPORTED THAT the Globetrotters keep packing in the crowds. At Birmingham last Sunday, with a 3 p.m. start and bucking two National Football League playoff games, they drew a gathering of 9,000 spectators.

"It was either play in the afternoon and take on the NFL, or at night, and go against the churches in Birmingham, and we chose the former course," said the native Kentuckian, with a laugh.

At the Omni in Atlanta last Saturday, the Trotters drew an amazing 23,000 fans to a pair of games played at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Sandefur said this has been the trend as the team lured 12,500 at the Jack Mathieson-managed Pittsburgh Civic Arena on Dec. 30. "The temperature was 20 degrees below zero, but Tom Rooney, director of marketing, really put together some great promotions for us there," said Sandefur.

He and the Trotters had to miss their own television special, shown in most parts of the country last Saturday, because it was preempted in Atlanta by a Georgia Tech vs. Wake Forest college basketball game.

After a holiday layoff from Dec. 15-25, the team packed in 10,000 fans for a traditional New Year's Eve booking at the MECCA in Milwaukee and had 5,000 at the new Orange County Civic Center in Orlando, Fla., on New Year's Day.

Some bad news hit while the club was in Atlanta as star Curly Neal found out his father had passed away. He immediately flew to Greensboro, N.C., for the funeral.

Sandefur and I were enjoying lunch at a restaurant called Michael's, when Jimmy Sturr, one of the top polka music band leaders in the country, stopped by our table. I told him Pilszak wanted to visit Poland while we're overseas, and the Pennsylvania native told me he has received an invitation from the Polish government to perform in that Communist-controlled country, in 1985. Maybe Ray can go along and shoot pictures.

■■■

ON THE SUBJECT of Greensboro, Sandefur said he had visited last week with Jim Oshust, who has managed the Coliseum in that city for the last 14 years.

He related a fascinating tale of how more than 15,000 people showed up for a wrestling card at the facility on Thanksgiving Day.

I had to know more about it, so I called Oshust.

"That's right. We had a sellout of 15,400 here, and tickets, if you can believe this, were scaled at \$20, \$15 and \$10," said Oshust.

"Not only that, the promoters, Jimmy Crockett and Joe Murnick, also did a closed-circuit telecast of the event, which was beamed into buildings in 10 cities.

"I believe it was piped into Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Asheville, Raleigh and Fayetteville in North Carolina, plus either Greenville or Spartanburg, or both, in South Carolina, plus Hampton, Richmond, Norfolk and Roanoke in Virginia.

"Our gross was somewhere around \$235,000 at the building, and I think they got around \$30,000 from the telecast. We handle our own food and drinks, and the per capita spending was about \$1.70. This would have been much higher, but because of the telecast, they had only two short breaks in the program."

Oshust said all tickets were handled by Ticketron, and fans came from as far away as New York. "A couple of vacationers arrived from California and a couple from Scranton, Pa. (my home town), showed up on the night of the match to find we had no room at the inn.

"We sent them 30 miles away to Winston-Salem, where they could view it on closed circuit."

Crockett, whose late father, Big Jim, who died in 1972, was a legend in the wrestling promotion business, labeled the show as "Starcade '83—A Flair for the Gold," which was a reference to one of his top wrestlers—Rick Flair.

"Normally, tickets go for \$8, \$7 and \$5," said Oshust, who said the Thanksgiving matches have been a tradition at the building for the last 24 years.

"We were sold out the Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day. We started the matches at 8:45 p.m. and opened the doors three hours earlier. Our lobby was full by 3 o'clock in the afternoon," said Oshust.

"Of the 24 years, Oshust related, "We sold out at least four with our current setup in the round and six more when we were set up to handle a crowd of 14,000 people."

If anybody was still wondering if wrestling were still alive and well, Oshust said the promoters book between 18 and 21 matches at his facility each year.

"They always work in a card during Christmas, Memorial Day, Fourth of

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FUN PARKS

Barbara Mandrell Country to open April 1 on Nashville's Music Row

By PATRICIA BATES

NASHVILLE—Barbara Mandrell Country became the second star-sponsored attraction in three weeks to be announced for Music Row here, after the entertainer disclosed Jan. 5 that she and CRC Equities, Nashville, would create a museum for her memorabilia.

Mickey Gilley and Johnny Lee have proposed a Gilley's western wear store for the now-shuttered Country Corner, whose contents were sold at public auction on Jan. 10.

Mandrell, addressing a press conference at the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum, said the \$3.2 million

former Country Crossroads complex across the street would be converted into Barbara Mandrell Country. She declined to reveal the "financial interest" she and her husband, Ken Duddy, share with CRC Equities, an investment partnership, but said they will spend an indefinite amount on retheming the 15,000 square-foot interior. CRC said the cost will be approximately \$500,000.

CRC owned and operated Country Crossroads, an animated music revue which bowed in 1983 on land purchased from the city.

After a disappointing debut season, the \$700,000 worth of Advanced Animation characters will be mothballed until they are sold, according to CRC consultant Tom Siegenthaler. Advanced Animation was absorbed

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Spruce Goose, Queen Mary gear for Games

Joe Prevratil is betting the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles will be good for business at the Spruce Goose and Queen Mary attractions in Long Beach, Calif. The vice president and general manager of Wrather Port Properties is planning extended hours and a special Americana nighttime activity this summer to attract those many foreign visitors destined for the Greater Los Angeles area for the Olympics.

"It will be more congested and I think people will be more selective with what they see, but once they get there, they'll stay longer," Prevratil predicted. He declined to describe the Americana plans, saying a major public relations announcement will be made in about six weeks. It will include fireworks nightly, a first for this attraction, but he deferred announcing the pyrotechnics firm until all details are made public.

The entertainment will run from mid-June until after Labor Day and, at that time, hours will be extended to 9 p.m., with opening at 10 a.m.

This season, hours were 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and attendance for the year tripled thanks to opening of the \$15 million Spruce Goose exhibit on May 14. Prevratil said total attendance for the two attractions was 1,350,000, of which 65 percent purchased the combination ticket allowing access to both the Spruce Goose and R.M.S. Queen Mary.

Individually, tickets were \$6, combined \$8. That price will be increased to \$6.50 and \$8.75 around Easter this year, he noted.

Parking will remain \$1, with 2,500 spaces available. "During the summer, we turned it over twice a day," he said. While attendance was "good all year," June through August were especially strong. From Christmas to New Year's, "we averaged 9,000 a day," he continued. The attraction's snack bar, operated in-house, opened in August, and catered parties are encouraged. The 2,000-square-foot souvenir shop has also done good business. Prevratil declined to cite a per capita figure, simply saying "it's been very good."

He attributed much of the year's success to "our billboard and television campaigns. The second-year effort will be expanded." The 1983 budget was well over \$1 million.



SHOWING AT HOME — After attending the International Assn. of Amusement Parks & Attractions trade show in New Orleans late last year, Rofraud and Klaus Huss, Huss Trading Corp., Bremen, West Germany, were to attend amusement industry activities closer to home as Intershow '84 and the European Showmen's Union convene in Hamburg, West Germany, Jan. 12-17. (AB Photo)

AQUA BLASTER

The new wave in water games.

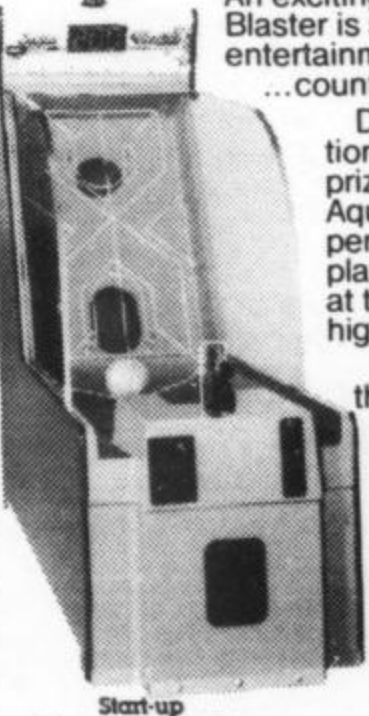
An exciting new water game, Aqua Blaster is simply a-mazing players in entertainment and amusement centers ...countrywide.

Designed to award redemption coupons good for valuable prizes at merchandising centers, Aqua Blaster automatically dispenses tickets each time the player successfully sinks the ball at the top of the maze with a high-pressure water gun.

Aqua Blaster is the newest in the expanding line of successful, solid-state merchandising games created by Skee-Ball.

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PT-128

Ogden gets...

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as china, glasses and flatware were bought for a 1,000 minimum serving. Since that figure has been raised to a 3,000 minimum, Ogden will be purchasing some 2,000 additional sets of china, glassware and eating utensils to take advantage of the proposed growth of catering in the facility.

"We have done groups of 100 up to 2,300," said facility Manager Robert Fouty, "and our North Hall holds 4,000 for a sitting. Before we signed Ogden on, we passed on a couple of large events because we didn't think we were capable of handling them. Now, that's a different story."

Originally, Ogden's arrival in the building was set to coincide with the Ohio Gun Collectors Assn. show in mid-January, but due to the lateness of the contract settlement, their first engagement will be a meeting of some 2,500 members of the Ohio Lumber Dealers, where there will be at least two or three large catered events.

This will kick off a year that is expected to see an equal number of events as 1983, when 451 events came into the building. Of that number, approximately 75 percent were conventions and trade shows, with only a handful of concerts on the calendar. Fouty noted that "the concert business isn't really in a recession any longer," but "is in a depression" in the Columbus area.

While the facility once did some three dozen shows per year, now "we're lucky to get a couple a month." Even the city's strongest promoter, Entertainment Services Inc., was sold to a Cleveland promoter last year as business declined.

"We think the employment opportunities will grow," continued Fouty, turning his attention to the potential of the convention market, "because the catering opportunities here have been virtually untapped."

Ogden will bring in three administrative personnel to work the food operation, although no decision has been made yet as to who will head it. The facility also will hire several hundred workers for the various events in the building.

"Other than the financial considerations," said Fouty, when asked about the awarding of the contract, "the most important factor was Ogden's professional presentation, and their in-depth experience in catering to all groups of people, which is what we're looking for."

Portemonts...

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Ride ticket prices this year will be the same as in 1983—75 cents per ride, \$6.50 for 10 tickets (\$1 savings) and \$10 for 16 (\$2 discount). The show began an advance sale program at the end of last season, which will be continued in 1984.

"The spring was very wet last year, and from July on, everything was excellent," Portemont reported. "We played one date with Lou Weaver (Interstate Amusements, New Smyrna Beach, Fla.) in Lawrenceville, Ga. (Gwinette County Fair), and we'll do the same this year." Dates are Sept. 20-29.

Start the New Year off right with a subscription to AB

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July and Labor Day," said Oshust. "Discounting Thanksgiving Day and one dog, which we always get in the summer when only about 3,100 attend, our average attendance is 7,000," he said.

The manager, who observed his 50th birthday on Dec. 22, said business has been excellent.

Upcoming after recent successes by .38 Special and Genesis, are concerts by Alabama, booked by Keith Fowler, Jan. 20-21, which are expected to draw 28,000 people and gross approximately \$340,000; Quiet Riot, Jan. 27; Van Halen, Feb. 3, and The Police, Feb. 10-11.

"That's news that won't be announced in our local papers until tomorrow," said Oshust, of the two Police shows.

"We sold out the first one in eight hours and got the group to agree to do another performance. Tickets go on sale tomorrow (Jan. 13)."

Oshust said his facility has had automated tickets since last March and they have brought about a trend.

"We find that 50-70 per cent of our tickets are sold in advance at the agencies, and the gate is one-third of what it used to be. This has benefitted us and the promoters, enabling us to cut staff and plan better for events."

Also booked are what Oshust laughingly called Feld's Follies—Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus—Feb. 21-26; the Globetrotters, March 14, and he's hoping to host appearances by the Statler Brothers and Conway Twitty in the near future.

The building is also home for seven college basketball contests for Wake Forest, two for the University of North Carolina, and it is scene of the McDonald's Classic Basketball Tournament each December.

WELL, I HADN'T heard, officially, that bowling was called off, so I just headed to my car. It took me 15 minutes to scrape off the snow and then I discovered that the windshield wipers on my car with the nice, big trunk weren't working.

So here I am back where it's warm, ready to hum a few La-La bars about some guys named LaSorda and LaMotta.

I was thrilled to receive a letter this week from the former, manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team.

In response to an article in a previous column, he wrote:

"Dear Tom: I just read the article in *Amusement Business* and I wanted to let you know how much I appreciated the kind words.

"My best to you, and I hope the New Year brings you much joy." It's signed, "Tom LaSorda," and that's one autograph I'll keep.

Joe LaMotta is the president of the International Independent Showmen's Assn., Gibsonton, Fla., which hosts its annual Trade Show and Extravaganza, Feb. 8-14.

Joe is a very community-minded guy. He came up with the idea of raising funds for deprived children by holding a circus, produced by club member Bill Rogers, in back of the club on Jan. 14.

Tickets were to sell for \$2 in advance for children and \$4 for adults, plus an extra dollar on the day of the show. Half of the proceeds were earmarked for regular club charities and the other half for the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services.

In addition, Jim Grogan was set to donate the services of his helicopter, offering rides to the children. Jim and Sally Windland of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus, did a professional job of handling the publicity locally, according to LaMotta.

Red Harper, by the way, told me the other day this will be his last term as secretary of the Gibtown club, largest showman's club (in number of members) in the world.

"I'll be going on the road early with my son-in-law, Ray Hrudka, who is concessions manager for Buster Brown on Bill Hames Shows," said Harper, who has handled his chores magnificently over the years.

"Besides, I'm collecting Social Security checks now and I'm getting older. With this job, you have to be here all the time. When the season's over, I'd like to sit back and relax a little in the future," said the old redhead.

ANOTHER OLDTIMER, DOUGLAS N. (Lucky) Lott, of Canadian thrill show fame, phoned today from Stratford, Ont., Canada, where he said there are five feet of snow on the ground.

Lott recalled that he used to work with such famous promoters as Al Sweeney, Frank Winkley and the late Pat Purcell, who were and are dear friends of mine.

Lott, a native of Pekin, Ill., will be at the Michigan fair convention in Dearborn later this month where our Steve Rogers will sit down with him to reminisce and write for a future issue about what sounded on the phone to be some incredible experiences.

"Oh, I'm still in the business, and I go back a long way. You can ask your Al Sweeney. He'll vouch for my credentials. We did a show featuring Barney Oldfield back in 1939. We're working on an act now where we land a tethered plane on top of trucks," said Lott.

He said he has obtained permission from the Federal Aviation Authority to perform the stunt.

Lott, who said he has more than 2,500 hours of flying time and flew Liberators with the Eighth Air Force in England during World War II, flew one of his two private planes to a thrill show at the Pontiac (Mich.) Silverdome last Saturday.

Produced by Bob George and Tony Vaccaro of Chicago-based SRO Productions, the event drew more than 50,000 people, 20,000 of whom were walk-ups, we discovered after a check with facility Manager Mike Abbingdon.

"They're drawing big crowds at these shows with a lot of hype, but they still lack the punch of the old days," said Lott.

Lott was getting ready to fly to another show, featuring Joie Chitwood at the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, Jan. 13-14, produced by Pace Management.

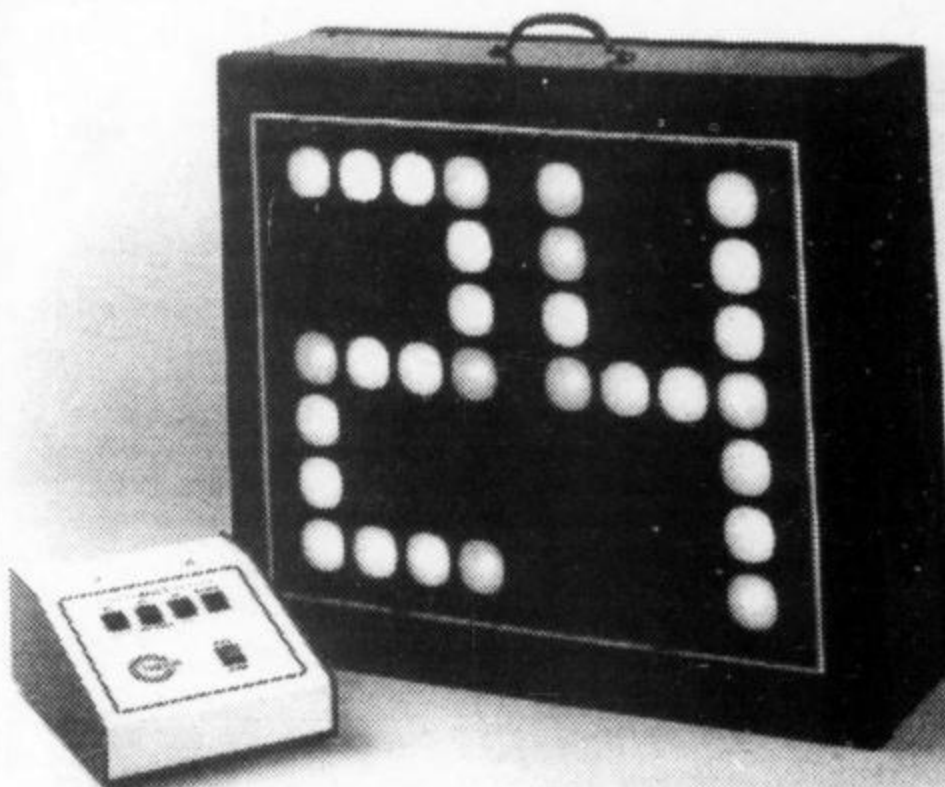
He told me his mother, Nellie, died last September in Minneapolis, while she was bowling—at the age of 102.

"We're working on another new stunt that will knock them dead. It's a head-on collision with two buses. One of them, believe it or not, will be stuffed with a car inside. On impact, the car will come booming out, like the birth of a baby," said Lott, asking, "How do you like that one?"

And here I am, worrying about the drive home.

NEW PRODUCTS

Send news of bona fide new products to Amusement Business, New Products Editor, P.O. Box 24970, Nashville, Tenn. 37202. Please include a black-and-white photograph suitable for reprint, the item's price and its specifications. Items pictured are neither staff-approved nor tested; responsibility for accuracy of information and prices rests solely upon the product manufacturers. Please mention AB when querying manufacturers about items seen in this column.



COUNTDOWN

Play ball with Fair-Play's new solid state, microprocessor-controlled basketball shot timer. Clear up all time disputes by relying on the foot-high numbers mounted in aluminum cabinets measuring 17 inches by 20 inches by seven inches. The timer, which is adjustable to all conference rules, is designed to operate independently of the master scoreboard, or can be connected directly to Fair-Play's solid state scoreboards. The timers are then coordinated with both the scoreboard clock and the goal lights. FAIR-PLAY SCOREBOARDS, P.O. Box 1847, Des Moines, Iowa 50306.

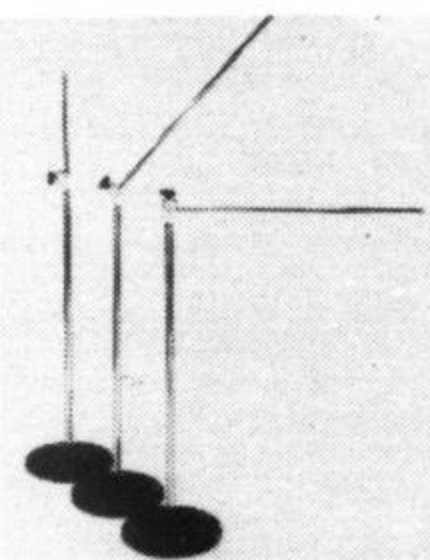
SOUND CHECK

The Son-Tector ultrasonic detector's "ears" locate air leaks in a typical industrial/transportation pneumatic system quicker than previous methods. Operating in the ultrasound region above 35,000 cycles per second, the unit can hear minute leaks of one-half cubic centimeter per second or more. Insensitive to normal sounds, the highly directional microphones can pick up leaks from many feet away. Other applications include detecting corona discharge, bearing condition analysis and steam trap inspection. TECHSONICS, P.O. Box 858, Halfway, Ore. 97834.



COCOA COOKER

Cecilware's new Hot Chocolate Dispenser was made for warming souls on cold winter nights. The Mini-Whipper produces 132 steaming cups of cocoa per hour. The stainless steel appliance uses a patented mixer chamber which eliminates the need for a whipper motor. CECILWARE CORP., 43-06 20th Ave., Long Island, N.Y. 11105.



STAND UP

Atlas Sound has just introduced a microphone stand that swings both ways. Model MSB-21 incorporates the features of both a vertical microphone and a horizontal boom. With a vertical height range of 42 inches to 70 inches, the stand also converts into a 42-inch-high stand with a 30-inch-long horizontal boom. For extra stability, the MSB-21 is supplied with a one-piece, 12-inch diameter, extra-weight cast base. ATLAS SOUND, 10 Pomeroy Road, Parsippany, N.J. 07054.

WATERFALL

Add visual excitement, color and the sound of falling rain, not to mention moisture, to your water recreation facility with WaveTek's new RainDrop. The low cost, water attraction product can be placed in play pools, adult activity pools, water playgrounds and activity coves. The RainDrop makes the perfect playtoy for water-bound children as they can play in it, hide in it and listen to it. The RainDrop package includes a fiberglass cap, seven-gauge stainless steel stem, eighteen-gauge stainless steel skirt, anchor bolts and rubber fittings. WAVETEK, P.O. Box 338, Mansfield, Ohio 44901.